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Detective Tells of Spying on Dan Rowan

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MIAMI—In the living room of his small stucco home, a private detective named Arthur J. Balletti spoke quietly about a domestic surveillance job he might have pulled for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Balletti said he did not really know. The surveillance, involving comedian Dan Rowan, occurred back in 1960. Some records of it have mysteriously disappeared.

Rowan's Las Vegas hotel room also was bugged at that time. But Balletti said this was done by "Fred Harris," the apparent code name of a coworker he claimed he had met for the first time. Balletti said it was Harris who carried all the electronic equipment.

Who ordered the job done on Rowan, and why? Balletti said Robert A. Maheu, then a paid consultant to industrialist Howard R. Hughes, gave the order, but that he—Balletti—was not told why.

"Maheu may only have been the middleman," Balletti said.

Maheu, who was hired by the Hughes organization in 1970, declined to discuss Balletti's statement with a reporter.

The Rowan incident, which is ex-

pected to be probed by Senate CIA investigators, is significant because it may have grown out of a CIA-Mafia connection in which Maheu allegedly played a role.

Sources have told The Times that Chicago mobster Sam Giancana worked with the CIA in the early 1960s on plans to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. Johnny Rosselli, an associate of Giancana, said in court four years ago that he figured in those assassination plans himself and that he worked with Maheu. But Rosselli has refused further comment.

According to a story in Time magazine last month, Rowan was friendly in 1960 with singer Phyllis McGuire, who was described as Giancana's girlfriend. As a favor to Giancana, the magazine said, the CIA sought to provide him with information on Rowan's involvement with Miss McGuire and bugged Rowan's hotel room in the process.

A stocky man of 44, Balletti was formerly employed by a Miami detective firm called Investigators, Inc. In October, 1960, his boss Edward L. DuBois Jr., told me I had a surveillance to work in Nevada," he relates.

"He was a good friend of Maheu's and both were former FBI agents," Balletti said. "We had done occasional work for Maheu—checking the background of individuals or companies—and Ed said this was another job Maheu had given us."

"But DuBois didn't tell me who the surveillance was on. He said I should call in for details once I got to Las Vegas."

When he phoned in, Balletti said he was instructed to put Rowan under surveillance at the Riviera Hotel and to watch for the appearance of Phyllis McGuire. He also was put in touch with "Harris," who Balletti said had checked into the Riviera to bug Rowan's room.

"Harris was the wire man, and I was to handle the physical surveillance of Rowan," Balletti said. "We were supposed to work together."

He said Harris was tight-lipped and told him only that he was from Los Angeles. The wire man never said for whom he was working, Balletti related.

A few days later, he said, he followed Rowan for a week-and-a-half—"on the golf course, at his club, everywhere"—and never spotted Miss McGuire. He said he dictated regular

reports to his Miami office.

Toward the end of October, Harris said he would have to leave Las Vegas for two days, but left his electronic gear in the hotel room. Balletti said. The room was directly above Rowan's.

On the night of Oct. 31, 1960, Clark County deputy sheriffs raided the room, arrested Balletti and confiscated all the equipment. He was charged with invasion of privacy by use of a listening device and with operating as a detective in Nevada without a state license.

Balletti said the raid resulted from a case of mistaken identity—that the officers had been searching for "Beer Bottle" Harris, a local burglar who had pulled a job the day before. As to Fred Harris, Balletti said he never saw him again, and no such person was charged in the Rowan bugging.

Once in custody, Balletti said he telephoned his boss, DuBois, and that Maheu arranged a bondsman for him. He was released from jail the next day. Charges against Balletti later were dropped at Rowan's request.

Adding to the mystery is the fact that the Clark County sheriff's department has no record of any arrest in the Rowan case. Rowan, however, said he clearly remembers the incident and confronted the man now identified as Balletti after his arrest.

"He claimed to be a private investigator out of Miami," Rowan said. "He was the coolest thing you ever saw. He didn't seem the least bit concerned. And I found out he was sprung (released from jail) quickly."

Edward L. Du Bois III, who succeeded his late father as head of Investigators, Inc., agreed with Balletti that the Rowan surveillance was instituted at Maheu's request. Both DuBois and Balletti said that they had never knowingly worked for the CIA.

DuBois told a reporter he would look up his own file on the case. But a few days later he said he had discovered that his file was missing.

Maheu, while declining comment, testified in a civil suit last year that he had done "sensitive" work for the CIA in 1960 and 1961 in the Miami area. At that time he headed his own consultant firm, called Maheu & Associates.

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